

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SP-02 INR-10

INRE-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 L-03 PM-05 DODE-00 PA-01

EUR-12 ARA-10 IO-13 /082 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 042

INFO AMEMBASSY COTONOU

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 LAGOS 10072

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PEPR, MARR, NI, DM

SUBJECT: NIGERIA/BENIN AGREEMENT

REF: A) LAGOS 9595, B) LAGOS 9870

SUMMARY. ACCORDING TO MEA AFRICA DEPARTMENT DEPUTY DIRECTOR FAFOWARA, NIGERIA HAS REFUSED TO SIGN A FORMAL DEFENSE AGREEMENT WITH BENIN. BENIN HAS BEEN TOLD, HOWEVER, THAT ANY REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE WILL BE GIVEN FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION. AT THE SAME TIME BENIN HAS ASSURED THE NIGERIANS THAT THE ROLE OF THE USSR AND CUBA IN BENIN'S MILITARY BUILDUP HAS BEEN LIMITED AND BENIN WILL ACCEPT NO MORE HELP FROM THEM. OBASANJO'S PRESS SECRETARY TOLD PAO THAT NEXT STEP IN FMG'S CAMPAIGN TO REMOVE SOVIET AND CUBAN INFLUENCE IN NEIGHBORING STATES WILL BE TO FORCE THE USSR OUT OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA. END SUMMARY.

1. WHEN QUERIED AUGUST 14 ABOUT RADIO REPORTS THAT NIGERIA AND BENIN HAD SIGNED A DEFENSE AGREEMENT THAT PROVIDED FOR NIGERIAN TRAINING OF BENINESE ARMED FORCES AND RECIPROCAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PORT AND AIRPORT TRAFFIC, MEA AFRICA DEPARTMENT DEPUTY DIRECTOR FAFOWARA TOLD POLCOUNS THAT THE RADIO REPORTS HAD RESULTED IN A LOT OF CONFUSION. A DEFENSE AGREEMENT AS SUCH HAD

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NOT BEEN SIGNED. ACCORDING TO FAFOWARA, BENIN HAS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS REQUESTED A FORMAL DEFENSE AGREEMENT WITH NIGERIA AND DID SO AGAIN DURING THE HEAD OF STATES'S RECENT MEETING WIK UPBLSSIDENT KEREKOU (REFTEL A). OBASANJO POLITELY REFUSED BUT ASSURED KEREKOU THAT NIGERIA WOULD REACT POSITIVELY TO ANY REQUESTS FOR HELP BY BENIN.

2. FAFOWARA ADMITTED THAT THE FMG HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED AT WHAT HAS APPEARED TO BE A BUILDUP OF THE BENINESE MILITARY BY THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA. DURING THE RECENT NEGOTIATIONS, KEREKOU ASSURED OBASANJO AND CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF LT GEN DANJUMA THAT THE SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE IN BUILDING UP THE MILITARY HAS BEEN LIMITED AND BENIN WILL ACCEPT NO MORE HELP FROM THEM.

3. FAFOWARA SAID THE TWO COUNTRIES HAVE CONCLUDED AN AGREEMENT INVOLVING SEVERAL OTHER ISSUES. NIGERIA WILL TRAIN SOME OF BENIN'S MILITARY. SOME OF THE PROVISIONS ENCOMPASS A CIVIL AIR AGREEMENT AND AN ISSUE INVOLVING PORT PAYMENTS HAS BEEN FINALLY RESOLVED. BOTH COUNTRIES WILL USE THE WEST AFRICAN CLEARING HOUSE IN FREETOWN INSTEAD OF EUROPEAN CLEARING HOUSES. ACCORDING TO FAFOWARA, THE AGREEMENT IS PRESENTLY BEING REVIEWED BY THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL.

4. COMMENT: ALEX NWOKEDI, OBASANJO'S PRESS SECRETARY, TOLD PAO LEWIS THAT RADIO BENIN HAD UNILATERALLY RELEASED THE RATHER CONFUSING ANNOUNCEMENT. WHEN VOICE OF NIGERIA PICKED IT UP, THEY REQUESTED AND WERE GRANTED PERMISSION TO REPEAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT. NWOKEDI SAID THE REVIEW OF THE AGREEMENT IS ONLY PRO FORMA. NO CHANGES WILL BE MADE BECAUSE DANJUMA NEGOTIATED IT. WHEN IT IS APPROVED A FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE.

5. NWOKEDI ALSO TOLD PAO THAT THE NEXT ITEM ON SMG'S AGENDA TO
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BE ACCOMPLISHED BEFORE THE TURNOVER TO CIVILIAN RULE IS TO FORCE THE SOVIET UNION OUT OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA. NIGERIA HAS A DEEP INTEREST BECAUSE OF 35,000 IBOS WHO "ARE BEING MISTREATED." NWOKEDI SAID THAT PRESIDENT NGUEMA WAS ONE OF THE AFRICAN LEADERS TO WHOM OBASANJO'S WORDS WERE BEING DIRECTED IN KHARTOUM.

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6. THE FIRST STEP IN THE SMG'S EQUATORIAL GUINEA CAMPAIGN WAS TAKEN WITH THE PUBLICATION OF AN EDITORIAL ON AUGUST 12 IN THE DAILY TIMES ENTITLED: "MAD MAN OF MALABO." AFTER OBSERVING THAT ONLY TWO YEARS AGO 40,000 NIGERIANS HAD TO BE EVACUATED FROM EQUATORIAL GUINEA, THE EDITORIAL NOTED: "IT MAY HAVE BEEN PRUDENT IN 1976 TO BE SELECTIVE IN OUR CONDEMNATION OF OPPRESSION AND TYRANNY. AND THE PARADOXICAL SITUATION SUCH PRUDENCE PUT US IN COULD AT LEAST BE EXPLAINED AWAY BY THE FACT THAT WE DID NOT THEN HAVE ANY EXPLICIT POLICY ON SUCH MATTERS. BUT WE DO HAVE A POLICY NOW. IT WAS NOT WITHOUT SUFFICIENT REFLECTION THAT THE HEAD OF STATE ANNOUNCED RECENTLY IN KHARTOUM THAT NIGERIA WOULD NO LONGER CONDONE OR BE SILENT OVER TYRANNY AND BARBARISM MERELY BECAUSE THE PERPETRATORS ARE BLACK OR AFRICAN. AND IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE CONSISTENT WITH THIS POLICY IF THIS COUNTRY BEGAN TO MAKE THE PLIGHT OF THE UNFORTUNATE PRISONERS OF NGUEMA'S ISLAND JAIL OUR URGENT BUSINESS." THE TIMES WENT ON TO SAY: "MACIAS NGUEMA HAS ALREADY GIVEN THE RUSSIANS PORT AND FISHING RIGHTS IN EQUATORIAL
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GUINEA. THERE ARE RUSSIAN MILITARY EXPERTS IN MALABO REPORTEDLY TRAINING NGUEMA'S ARMED HOODLUMS. AND SHOULD THE RUSSIANS BECOME SQUEAMISH OVER NGUEMA'S MORE DEVILISH ATROCITIES, HE COULD TURN TO SOUTH AFRICA FOR HELP. AND THAT WOULD IN TURN CONSTITUTE A DECISIVE THREAT TO OUR OWN SECURITY. IT IS BETTER TO GET THAT MAD JOKER TO MEND HIS BAD WAYS NOW. BEFORE HE ALLOWS THE STENCH OF HIS ISLAND SLAUGHTER-HOUSE TO POLLUTE OUR SHORES AND OUR SECURITY."

7. NWOKEDI ALSO NOTED THAT NIGERIA'S RECENT NEGOTIATION WITH BENIN WAS CONSIDERED BY THE FMG TO BE ONE OF THE REASONS THE SOVIET UNION CANCELLED KOSYGIN'S VISIT TO NIGERIA (REFTEL B). NWOKEDI SAID THE USSR TOOK A DIM VIEW OF THE MEETINGS, WHICH

WERE AIMED AT REDUCING THE NEED OF SOVIET AID AND
DIMINISHING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN BENIN.
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